



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

May 2024

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1. Introduction

We pride ourselves on delivering good quality services and recognise that all feedback is valuable. We like to know when we do something well, how we can improve, and if something has gone wrong so we can put it right, learn from our mistakes and improve our services.

This policy sets out how we handle corporate complaints, comments and compliments. It explains what the policy is for, who it affects, and what it is designed to achieve. Where relevant, it also highlights other, related, policies, which you might want to be aware of.

This policy will be available on our website and paper copies will be available at key locations such as Hounslow House and community hubs, including libraries across the borough.

2. What the policy is for (purpose)

This policy sets out how we handle corporate complaints, comments and compliments from residents, businesses or other stakeholders about the services, actions, or decisions of the Council.

It provides a framework to ensure that we treat complainants consistently and fairly, work together to resolve complaints, and help us understand what we can do differently to improve services in the future. Appendix 1 outlines the procedure for lodging a complaint, the steps involved in the complaint resolution process, timelines for responses, and the standards of conduct expected from both the complainant and the Council staff handling the complaint.

This policy and our complaints procedure (see Appendix 1) reflects the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Codes. Details of both codes can be found at the following links:

[Complaint Handling Code 2024 - Housing Ombudsman](#)

[Complaint Handling Code - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

This policy applies to services that the Council currently provides or delivers through a partner organisation. such as Lampton Services (repairs service), Lampton Leisure, Recycle 360, Greenspace and Hounslow Highways. It applies to all Council employees as well as to employees and organisations who deliver services on behalf of the Council.

3. What the policy is designed to achieve (aims)

This policy is designed to ensure we provide a prompt, fair and effective resolution to all complaints. We welcome any comments to provide us with valuable information on how we can improve our service and performance. It is useful to know when we are doing something well, through compliments.

We commit to doing the following:

- Provide an easy and accessible way to raise complaints
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully

- Investigate all complaints on their merits in an impartial and fair manner
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest in the management of complaints
- Review and act on any lessons learned following receipt of a complaint to improve our services
- Provide training and support to staff involved in the complaints handling process, enabling them to have the skills and knowledge required to effectively manage complaints received and contribute to a positive resolution
- Ensure that we facilitate a culture of continuous improvement by analysing trends and patterns in complaints, identifying systematic issues, and using data to implement corrective actions to improve service delivery and prevent recurrence of the complaint.

4. Who the policy affects (scope)

Local residents who interact with the Council's services or are affected by its decisions.

Local businesses that operate within the Council's area.

Local community groups that collaborate with or are impacted by the Council's activities, projects, or policies.

Visitors to the borough may also encounter situations where they feel the need to raise a complaint, make a comment or give a compliment regarding facilities, services, or interactions with Council representatives.

Council employees and staff of partner organisations delivering Council services or making decisions may be subject to complaints and are guided by the policy in handling and responding to these issues.

Councillors might receive complaints directly from constituents or may be involved in overseeing the implementation and adherence to this policy.

More broadly, anyone with an interest in the Council's operations, transparency, and accountability can be affected by the effectiveness and fairness of this policy.

There are some types of complaints that fall outside the scope of this policy because there are other, more suitable processes for dealing with them, such as statutory processes or appeals. These are set out in detail at Appendix 2.

5. Definitions

5.1 Complaints

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its staff, or those acting on the Council's behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

Not every expression of dissatisfaction will be a complaint. Some expressions of dissatisfaction with the Council's actions will be treated as a request for us to do something, a service request.

When we receive a complaint from you, we let will you know how we will respond to it. If it is a service request, it will be referred to the appropriate service team to resolve.

If we receive an expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey this will not be defined as a complaint. However, we will advise you how to make a complaint should you wish to do so.

This policy covers the following instances:

- Dissatisfaction with the standard of the service we have provided.
- We have failed to follow our policies and procedures.
- There has been a significant or repeated failure to provide a service.
- We have failed to do what we said we would do.
- We have failed to respond.

Each complaint will be considered on its merits considering the individual circumstances of the complaint. We will accept complaints unless there is a valid reason not to do so. For example, if there is a statutory or appeals process. If we do not accept the complaint, we will explain the reasons for our decision and why the matter is not suitable for the complaint process and the right to take that decision to the relevant Ombudsman.

We will accept complaints within twelve months of the issue occurring or the complainant becoming aware of the issue.

5.2 Comments

Some complaints are not about the Council's failure to meet its service standards but are expressions of dissatisfaction with a specific policy or a general comment about a Council service. We cannot pursue these through the complaints process but will deal with them as 'comments' to ensure that:

- The policy is up-to-date and consistent with relevant legislation and standards.
- The relevant service area is made aware of your comments.

If relevant, the comments will be considered when our complaints policy is reviewed.

5.3 Compliments

We welcome feedback about resident's good experiences of the Council, its staff and the services it provides, as this tells us what we are doing well and should continue to do. It also enables us to recognise individuals who have provided excellent customer service.

5.4 Service Requests

Service requests are not complaints, and we will deal with these as part of the Council's day to day business, rather than through our complaint's process. The most effective way to request a service or report something to the Council is through our standard customer contact channels found on the website:

[Report an issue | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

We will raise a complaint if you are dissatisfied with the response to your service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

6. How to complain, make a comment or compliment

There are a number of ways that you can submit complaints, comments or compliments, including an online form on the Council's website, by e-mail and by phone. The contact details are as follows:

Online complaints and comments: www.hounslow.gov.uk/complain

Online compliments: [Compliments \(hounslow.gov.uk\)](http://Compliments (hounslow.gov.uk))

E-mail: feedback@hounslow.gov.uk

Phone: 020 8583 5211

In writing to: Customer Relations Team
London Borough of Hounslow
Hounslow House
7 Bath Road
Hounslow, TW3 3EB

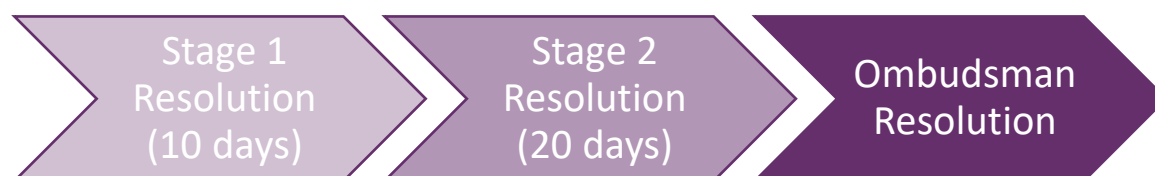
For more information on the complaints process please see our detailed procedure at Appendix 1 below.

7. Other relevant policies

Unreasonable and persistent complaints behaviour

Appendix 1: The Complaints Process

The Council has a two-stage procedure that is designed to support the effective management and resolution of complaints.



Stage 1

If you wish to make a complaint, we would like to hear from you as soon as possible so we can investigate and resolve your complaint. We encourage residents to provide an explanation so that we have a clear record to assist with our enquiries. You will need to provide us as much information as possible, including the following:

- What do you think was gone wrong
- What impact has this had on you
- The impact to you and your family
- The action would you like us to take

On receipt of a complaint, we will acknowledge it **within five working days** setting out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes being sought. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, we will ask you for clarification.

The relevant service area will investigate your complaint and will respond **within ten working days** from the acknowledgement date.

If you raise additional related complaints during the stage 1 investigation and the response has not been issued, we will incorporate these in the original stage 1 complaint. If the response has been issued or the issues are unrelated or it would unreasonably delay the response, we will log as a new complaint.

The stage 1 response timescale may be extended for a further ten working days if the matter is complex and further time is necessary. In this case, we will inform you explaining the reasons and provide the details of the relevant Ombudsman.

On completion of the investigation, the Head of Service will reach a conclusion, based on their findings, determine whether they have found fault, and notify you if the complaint is:

- Upheld.
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld.

In our response to you, we will explain the reasons for our decision, provide details of any remedies (if appropriate), provide details of any outstanding actions and how to escalate to stage 2 if you remain dissatisfied.

The aim of the stage 1 investigation is to provide you with a fair and satisfactory resolution to your complaint. However, if all or part of the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction at stage 1, the complaint can be progressed to stage 2 of our complaints process. That is, unless there are valid reasons not to do so, in which case we will explain the reasons for our decision.

When making a stage 2 complaint, we ask that you explain to us in what way you believe that your complaint was not addressed properly at Stage 1.

Stage 2

When we receive your request for an escalation of a complaint to stage 2 of our process, we will acknowledge this **within five working days** of receipt, setting out our understanding of the complaint and the desired outcome.

The relevant service area will investigate your complaint and respond within twenty working days. This will be a different person from the stage 1 investigation.

We may decide that additional time is necessary if the complaint is complex and we will extend the time scales for a response for a further twenty working days. We will notify you if an extension is necessary and inform you of the reasons. At the same time, we will provide you with details of the relevant Ombudsman.

On completion of the investigation, the Assistant Director or Director will reach a conclusion, based on their findings, determine whether they have found fault, and notify you if the complaint is:

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld.

In our response to you, we will explain the reasons for our decision, provide details of any remedies (if appropriate), provide details of any outstanding actions and let you know how to escalate to the relevant Ombudsman if you remain dissatisfied as the stage 2 response is our final response.

The request for a further review will be handled by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman Service. (Please see point 9. Ombudsman Resolution - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) complaints on page 11 for more information).

Putting things right

When something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have already taken or intend to take to put things right. These can include:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- Taking action if there has been a delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision

- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

Some actions may not be completed when we respond to your complaint and we will explain which actions are outstanding and when they will be completed within the response letter.

Representatives

We encourage residents to contact us directly. However, we can accept complaints from a representative on behalf of someone else, such as friends, solicitors, advice agencies or advocacy workers. We will require written permission along with any necessary identification from the complainant to ensure that we comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 that incorporates implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). (see Form B). You also have the opportunity to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with us.

How to complain, make a comment or compliment

There are a number of ways that you can submit complaints, comments or compliments, including an online form on the Council's website, by e-mail and by phone. The contact details are as follows:

Online complaints and comments: www.hounslow.gov.uk/complain

Online compliments: [Compliments \(hounslow.gov.uk\)](http://Compliments (hounslow.gov.uk))

E-mail: feedback@hounslow.gov.uk

Phone: 020 8583 5211

In writing to: Customer Relations Team
London Borough of Hounslow
Hounslow House
7 Bath Road
Hounslow, TW3 3EB

You can raise your complaint with any member of the staff, and they will pass details of the complaint to the Customer Relations Team. Although we can receive complaints by telephone, we always encourage residents to submit their complaints in writing. This is so that we have all the details of the complaint, in your own words, which will avoid any possibility of misinterpretation by the person receiving the complaint.

If you have difficulty in making a complaint, such as a disability, please let us know so we can consider our duties under the Equality Act and make reasonable adjustments to access the complaint process.

Ombudsman Resolution – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaints

If, following an investigation of your complaint at Stage 2 of the Council's complaint process you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to refer your complaint to the LGSCO or the HOS.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The LGSCO is an independent organisation which investigates complaints about maladministration against councils.

Their contact details are:

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint>

The Local and Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Although you can take seek resolution from the LGSCO at any stage of a complaint, the Local Government Act 1974 requires that the Ombudsman allows the Council the opportunity to investigate a complaint through its own complaints policy before carrying out an independent investigation.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent organisation which investigates complaints relating to tenant and leaseholder matters and landlord functions.

Their contact details are:

<http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

If the LGSCO or HOS does become involved, all further contact about the complaint will be through the Council's Customer Relations Team, who will co-ordinate the investigation and response to the LGSCO or HOS.

When we receive a complaint from the LGSCO or HOS, we will notify the relevant senior manager to ensure that they are aware of the issues and can take appropriate action to resolve them.

Both Ombudsman have a joint Complaint Handling Code and details can be found at the following links:

[Complaint Handling Code 2024 - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

[Complaint Handling Code - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Complaints about discrimination

The Council is committed to equal opportunities for everyone who uses or receives Council services, but if you believe that you have been discriminated against, you have the right to make a complaint.

Discrimination means treating you unfairly because of who you are. The Council is required by law, the Equality Act 2010, to treat everyone fairly and equally. This law protects you against discrimination on the basis of one of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

Complaints about discrimination by the Council will be dealt with under this policy by the relevant Head of Service, who may need to seek advice and guidance from the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

If you have a complaint about discrimination by the Council, please contact the Customer Relations Team. If your complaint is about a third party such as a Council appointed provider of a service, please use their complaints policy and complain directly to them in the first instance.

In order for us to deal with your complaint, you will need to provide details of your complaint and the basis on which you believe that you have been discriminated against. Nobody is treated differently because they have made a complaint. If they believe they have been, please let us know.

Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complaints

In some cases, complaints are pursued in a way which can either impede the investigation of a complaint, or the resident's behaviour becomes unreasonable.

We do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by residents.

We will take action to protect staff from such unreasonable behaviour. The Council has a policy that covers unreasonable or unreasonably persistent behaviour by residents and details can be found at the following link:

https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/715/unreasonable_and_persistent_complaints_behaviour.pdf

We will not discriminate against anyone who makes a complaint. We will seek to manage the behaviour under the unreasonable and persistent complaints behaviour policy as necessary, while treating the complaint like any other.

Confidentiality

We will deal with all communication from residents in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

The identity of the person contacting us will be made known only to those who need to know in order for us to deal with the communication effectively and will not be made public by the Council.

Appendix 2: Complaints Outside the Scope of this Policy

There are some types of complaints that fall outside the scope of this policy because there are other, more suitable processes for dealing with them, such as statutory processes or appeals. These include the following:

Council Tax and Benefits

Council tax banding decisions: We have no influence over Council Tax banding. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) sets your council tax band. If you have asked the VOA to change your band, and you are unhappy with their decision, you may be able to appeal. You can find more information at:

[How much you should pay? | Paying your Council Tax | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

Council tax support: If you think the council's decision is wrong, you may be able to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal England (VTE). Before you appeal, you must have already contacted CURevenues@hounslow.gov.uk to explain what the problem is, the council should reply to you within 2 months. If you are not happy with the council's response, you can make an appeal direct to the Valuation Tribunal England (VTE) on the VTE's own appeal form.

Further information can be found at the following links and contacts:

VTE web-site:	www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk
Telephone appeal line:	0303 445 8100
Email:	appeals@valuationtribunal.gov.uk
Address:	Valuation Tribunal Office, 2nd Floor 120 Leman Street London E1 8EU

Housing Benefit: If you are not satisfied with decision, you can appeal at the following link: [Housing benefit appeals | Housing benefit appeals | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

Councillors

Complaints about the conduct of Members (Councillors) will be considered by the Council's Monitoring Officer. This will be in accordance with the arrangements for dealing with allegations that the Code of Conduct for Members has been breached. As such these may be referred to the Council's Standards Committee.

[Complain about a Councillor breaching code of conduct | Make a complaint or comment | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

Data Protection

Refusals to disclose information under the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 that incorporates implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Please contact Customer Relations: dataprotection@hounslow.gov.uk.

Education

Complaints about Schools: Schools have their own complaints procedures and the Local Authority no longer has a role to play in investigating complaints.

All schools are required to provide their Complaints policy on their website and provide a paper copy on request. Complaints about a school or a member of school staff should be made to the Head Teacher.

Where a resolution is not found at this stage, the complaint should be referred to the governing body. Complaints about a Head Teacher should be made to the Chair of Governors. The contact details for schools in Hounslow can be found via the following link: https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/directory/11/directory_of_schools_in_hounslow

School admissions issues are dealt with by an Admission Appeal Panel.

[School appeals | School appeals | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

Issues about **Special Education Needs (SEN)** provision are dealt with by their own appeals process:

[First-tier Tribunal \(Special Educational Needs and Disability\) - GOV.UK](#)

Enforcement

The Council's decision to take, or not to take, enforcement action or use powers to prosecute. For example, noise nuisance, anti-social behaviour.

Housing

Homelessness applications (Part VII): How the Council deals with homelessness applications, the suitability of interim or temporary accommodation and homelessness application decisions are dealt with in accordance with a statutory review and appeal process. For such a review please contact: Reviews@hounslow.gov.uk

Outcomes of housing application assessments (Part VI), including priority band and medical decisions are dealt with by separate internal review processes. You can request a review of the assessment of your housing application by emailing:

Reviews@hounslow.gov.uk

Challenges from Leaseholders about service charges are dealt with by the Leasehold Income Team. Please contact them by e-mail at the following address:

Leaseholdservices@hounslow.gov.uk

If the dispute cannot be resolved by this process, you should approach the Leasehold Advisory Service: <http://www.lease-advice.org/advice-guide/service-charges-and-other-issues/>

Complaints about Registered Social Housing Providers (also known as 'Housing Associations'): The Council does not have any jurisdiction over the day-to-day management of other social landlords. If you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving from your social landlord, you should make a complaint to them. You can do this online by completing and submitting a complaint form on their website.

If after making a complaint you are not satisfied that your landlord has resolved the matter or dealt with your complaint appropriately, you should seek further advice from the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by statute to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them and to resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords. You can find more information on the Housing Ombudsman website at <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>.

Outcomes of a Housing enforcement decision for private sector housing are handled as an appeal: <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber>

Insurance claims

Insurance: Insurance claims or complaints about how an insurance claim has been dealt with or about the outcome of an insurance claim. Decisions on the outcome of an insurance claim are made by the Council's insurer not the Council. Complaints on how a claim has been dealt with will be considered by our insurer.

Legal

Complaints where the resident has started legal proceedings such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim having been filed at Court, complaint is being or has previously been considered under the complaint policy, by a court or tribunal or it has been addressed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman ruling.

Parking

Penalty Charge Notices including moving traffic offences: Any matters relating to a penalty charge notice (PCN) are dealt with by a statutory appeals process. Please see the web link below:

[Appeal your PCN | Appeal your PCN | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

Planning

Planning decisions and outcomes of planning enforcement actions are dealt with under the Town and Country Planning appeals procedure:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/appeals/planninginspectorate>

Procurement

Complaints from suppliers or potential suppliers relating to the award of contracts are dealt with under the procurement process. You can find more information on the Council's website at:

[Procurement - what we do | Procurement - what we do | London Borough of Hounslow](#)

Social Care

Complaints about Social Care Services: The procedures and timescales are different to other services. These are dealt with under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006; and the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

More information can be found on the Council's website:

https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/19999/your_council_and_elections/1402/complaints/9

Social care financial assessments: These are dealt with by the Financial Assessment Review and Appeals Procedure. Please contact the following email address:
careplace@hounslow.gov.uk

Staff

Complaints about staff conduct – some elements of staff conduct may be subject to the Council's HR Management policies.

We will not manage enquiries from Councillors and MPs within this policy, but under a separate process. These will be dealt with as enquiries rather than complaints.

This list is a guide and is not exhaustive. There may be other issues that we are unable to investigate because there is a more appropriate body or process. In such circumstance, we will advise you of the appropriate process and procedure.

Appendix 3: Form B

Authority to Provide Feedback and Disclose Personal Information

I, authorise to
provide feedback on my behalf to the London Borough of Hounslow and to
request the following information and documentation they require from the
London Borough of Hounslow:

Type of Information or documentation (please be as specific as possible)

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signature:

Date:

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

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