

Complaints Compliments



Gateshead Council's Complaints Procedure Have **your** say





Have your say

This leaflet sets out what you should do if you are unhappy with a service we have provided.

It includes:

- a step-by-step guide to help you; and
- a complaint and compliment form at the back, which you can return to us free of charge.

We hope you find this information useful. However, if you need more help and advice, please get in touch. You can find our contact details at the end of the leaflet.

Different formats

To get this information in large print, in Braille or on audiotape, please ring 0191 433 3444. We can also provide leaflets in Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Hindi, Cantonese, Farsi, Czech, French, Portuguese and Sorani. For a copy, please ring the number shown above or you can pick one up from Council reception desks.



I'm worried that if I complain, the service I receive will be affected.

Definitely not. We always aim to provide the best possible service to all our customers, and we will not change that just because we are investigating your complaint.

Is the information I give you confidential?

Any information you give us is covered by Data Protection guidelines. This means that we:

- will keep personal data safe and secure;
- will not share it with other organisations without your permission, unless the law says we must; and
- may use it to prevent and detect fraud.

I want to make a complaint, but want to stay anonymous - will you still look into it?

Yes. While it is helpful to us to know who you are so we can get in touch with you for extra details, we believe everyone has a right to complain. As a result we will investigate anonymous complaints thoroughly.

I don't have a complaint, but want to give you my views on a service - how can I do that?

We appreciate any comments about our services - good and bad. You can give us your views at any time in writing, by phone, by e-mail or in person.



Step 3 - Review

If you are still unhappy, you can ask our Chief Executive to look again at your complaint. Please do this within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. The Chief Executive will give you a full response within 20 working days. However, this may take longer if your case is complicated.

Your other questions answered

If I am not happy with the way my complaint is being handled, is there anyone else I can contact?

Yes.

You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). We will give you details at any stage of your complaint with us. The LGO was set up by the Government to investigate complaints about councils. You can refer your complaint to the Ombudsman at any time during the course of any investigation we are carrying out, or after the investigation has finished.

The Ombudsman's address is:

Local Government Ombudsman,
Beverley House,
17 Shipton Road,
York YO30 5FZ.

Phone: 01904 380 200

Fax: 01904 380 269

E-mail: enquiries.york@lgo.org.uk

When things go wrong we want to know about it

By giving us your views on our services, you can help us to:

- put things right if we have made mistakes; and
- continually improve our services and make sure we do not repeat mistakes.

So, how does the complaints process work?

Basically there are three steps. You may not have to go through all of these. It will depend on how satisfied you are with our response at the end of each stage. We handle most complaints following this process. However, depending on the nature of your complaint, we may deal with it differently. If this is the case, we will tell you straight away and tell you what to do.

Step 1 - Problem-solving

As soon as we get your complaint, we will try to sort it out quickly and informally by providing information or taking any appropriate action.

Step 2 - Investigation

If we cannot sort your complaint out immediately, we will send you a letter within three working days that tells you:

- who you can contact about your complaint;
- what we will do; and
- how long we will take to deal with it. This is normally within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we will tell you why and give you a date when you will get a response.

Once the investigation is complete, you will receive the results in writing from a senior manager.

Making **your** complaint



You can make a complaint (or compliment) in a number of ways. You can:

- speak to your local Councillor;
- visit any Council office;
- use the pre-printed form (attached);
- phone us on: **0191 433 3000**
(ask for the service area you need);
- e-mail us at: **haveyoursay@gateshead.gov.uk**;
- visit the website:
www.gateshead.gov.uk/haveyoursay
(you can fill in a complaint form online); or
- write a letter to:

Have **your** say
Gateshead Council
Civic Centre, Regent Street,
Gateshead NE8 1HH

You can also contact your local MP or get advice about your complaint from Citizens Advice.

The address of the local office is:

Citizens' Advice Bureau
5-6 Regent Terrace,
Gateshead

Phone: 0191 477 1392

