

# how to make a complaint listening to you

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# Listening to you

North Lanarkshire Council is committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

## What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or, about the standard of service provided.

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- council policy
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure

Your complaint may involve more than one council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

The procedure for social work complaints is slightly different from our general complaints procedure, as it currently follows specific legislation and guidance. This legislation and guidance is being reviewed by the Scottish Government. In due course, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) will inform us about any changes to the procedure. The current procedure for social work complaints is available at [www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/listening](http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/listening).



## What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example a first-time request for a housing repair or action on anti-social behaviour
- requests for compensation from the council
- things that are covered by a right of appeal; here are some examples:
  - if you are dissatisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you have the right to appeal against the decision
  - if your planning application is refused, you have a right of appeal to Scottish Ministers within three months of the decision being made
  - if you believe your house is incorrectly valued for council tax, you can appeal to the Assessor

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

The policy does not deal with complaints relating to the actions or conduct of councillors. Councillors are required to comply with a Councillors Code of Conduct, details of which can be found at: [www.publicstandardscommissioner.org.uk](http://www.publicstandardscommissioner.org.uk).

Complaints relating to councillors should be directed to the Public Standards Commissioner, 39 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7SW.

## Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section 'Getting help to make your complaint'.



## How do I complain?

You can complain in person at any of our offices, by phone, in writing or by email.

It is usually easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter

Please contact us:

- in person
- by phone on 01698 403200
- online at [northlanarkshire.gov.uk/listening](http://northlanarkshire.gov.uk/listening)
- by email at [listening@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:listening@northlan.gov.uk)
- in writing at Northline General Enquiries, 52-60 Merry Street, Motherwell ML1 1LZ

## How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

### Stage one: frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at stage one in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to stage two. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

### Stage two: investigation

Stage two deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage one and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using stage two we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days

We may need to discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

## What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court

You can contact the SPSO:

**In person**      SPSO  
4 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7NS

**By post**      SPSO  
Freepost EH641  
Edinburgh  
EH3 0BR

**Free phone**      0800 377 7330  
**Website**      [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)  
**Mobile**      site <http://m.spsso.org.uk>





## Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

**Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

**Tel: 0131 260 5380**

**Fax: 0131 260 5381**

**Website: [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)**

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services.

## Quick guide to our complaints procedure

### Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing. We have a two-stage complaints procedure. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.



### Stage one: frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within five working days if we can. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage two.



### Stage two: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage one. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 20 working days unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.



### The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.



This information can be made available in a range of languages and formats, including large print, braille, audio, electronic and accessible formats.

如果你需要用其他语言或者其他格式表示这些信息，请与我们联系以便讨论你的要求。

Jeżeli potrzebujesz tą informację w innym języku lub formacie, proszę, skontaktuj się z nami, żeby przedyskutować Twoją potrzebę.

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