

**WEST
DUNBARTONSHIRE
COUNCIL**

Complaints procedure

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Complaints procedure

West Dunbartonshire Council is committed to providing high-quality citizen services.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are not happy with our services, please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our complaints service standards and what you can expect from us.



What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of unhappiness about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

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.

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 six months of the decision.
 - ▶ 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.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is unhappy with our service. We will confirm the details of the representative and check the citizen is happy for us to discuss information with a third party. Please also read the section '**Getting help to make your complaint**'.

How do I complain?

You can complain using our online complaints form, by e-mail, by phone, in person at any of our offices or in writing to **Citizens Relations at 6 -14 Bridge Street, Dumbarton, G82 1NT.**

It is usually easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please speak with a member of staff within 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.**

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.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Online complaints form: | www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk |
| By email: | customer.relations@west-dunbarton.gov.uk |
| By phone: | 01389 738273 |
| Written correspondence | Citizen Relations West Dunbartonshire Council 6 - 14 Bridge Street Dumbarton G82 1NT |

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 1 within five working days, 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 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage two: investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- **acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two working days**
- **discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain unhappy and what outcome you are looking for**
- **give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.**

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 not satisfied 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:

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**
Online: **www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us**
Website: **www.spsso.org.uk**
Mobile site: **<http://m.spsso.org.uk>**
By post **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, FREEPOST**

Social work complaints

The procedure for social work complaints is slightly different from our general complaints procedure. The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) deliver health and social care services together.

Further information on making a complaint to HSCP can be found on their website:
<http://www.wdhscp.org.uk/complaints/>

Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them:

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland. Please refer to:

Website: **<http://www.careinspectorate.com/> (online complaints form)**
Telephone: **0845 600 9527**
Fax: **01382 207 289**
Email: **enquiries@careinspectorate.com**

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 unhappy 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.

Website: **www.siaa.org.uk**
Tel: **0131 524 1975**



Citizen Relations

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 citizens access and use our services.

If you prefer to make your complaint in writing and need help to do this, please contact us for more information. Our contact details are listed below, please choose the option that suits you best:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Online complaints form: | www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk |
| By email: | customer.relations@west-dunbarton.gov.uk |
| By phone: | 01389 738273 |
| Written correspondence: | Citizen Relations West Dunbartonshire Council 6 - 14 Bridge Street Dumbarton, G82 1NT |

We can also give you this document in other languages and formats, such as large print, audio and Braille.

