

# Complaints procedure





# Complaints procedure

We're committed to providing high-quality customer services. However, we understand that sometimes things can go wrong. We value complaints and use the information from them to help us improve our services.



## WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction 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:

- failure or refusal to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).



Your complaint may involve more than one East Renfrewshire 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
- a first-time report of a fault (for example, potholes or street lighting)
- a request for compensation only
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector – such as council tax, planning, or a parking ticket appeal
- disagreement with decisions or conditions that are based upon social work recommendations, but determined by a court or other statutory body, for example decisions made by a children's panel, parole board or mental health tribunal
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts
- a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Unacceptable Actions Policy; or
- a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).

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 who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on Getting help to make your complaint on the following page.



## HOW DO I COMPLAIN?

The quickest and easiest way to make a complaint is by using our online form, you can find it here [www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/complaints). You can also contact us by phone, e-mail or in person.

It is easier for us to address 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 the issue.

### **When complaining, please tell us:**

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong; and
- what outcome you are seeking.



## 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.

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 1: FRONTLINE RESPONSE**

We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2 either:

- within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
- within two months of receiving your stage 1 response (if this is later). In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage 1 and those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage. If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at stage 2 instead.

### When using stage 2:

- we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- we will confirm our understanding of the complaint we will investigate and what outcome you are looking for
- we will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and
- where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will tell you our revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.



### WHAT IF I'M STILL DISSATISFIED?

After we have given you our final decision, 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 are an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).**

**You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:**

- **you have gone all the way through the East Renfrewshire Council's complaints handling procedure**
- **it is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and**
- **the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.**

**The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this online at [www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form](http://www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form) or call them on Freephone 0800 377 7330. You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section on Getting help to make your complaint below.**

#### **The SPSO's contact details are:**

SPSO  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS  
(if you would like to visit in person,  
you must make an appointment first)

#### **Their freepost address is:**

FREEPOST SPSO

**Freephone:** 0800 377 7330

#### **Online contact:**

[www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

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



## 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: <http://www.scswis.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 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 510 9410 Website: <http://www.siaa.org.uk>

You can find out about advisers in your area through Citizens Advice Scotland:

### **Citizens Advice Scotland**

Website: <http://www.cas.org.uk> or check your phone book for your local citizens advice bureau.

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 you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on 0141 577 3001 or email us at [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)



## OUR CONTACT DETAILS

### **Please contact us by the following means:**

To enable us to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible, please complete our online complaints form by visiting [www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/complaints)

### **Alternatively you can:**

**Call us on** 0141 577 3001

**E-mail us at** [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

### **Visit us at our customer service centre at:**

Council offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, G78 1SY

**Or write to us** at the address above.



# Quick guide to our complaints procedure



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email 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 1: 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 2.



## STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION



We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. 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 confirm the points of complaint to be investigated and what you want to achieve.

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 have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it. We will tell you how to do this and provide details of alternative routes if required when we send you our final decision.



This document can be explained to you in other languages and can be provided in alternative formats such as large print or Braille. For further information, please contact Customer First on 0141 577 3001 or email [\*\*customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

Faodar am pàipear seo fhaotainn ann an Gàidhlig agus ann an cruthan eile mar ann an clò mòr agus Braille. Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh, feuch gun cuir sibh fios gu Customer First air 0141 577 3001 no post-d gu [\*\*customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

इस सूचना-पत्र मे उल्लेखित सूचना यदि आप हिन्दी अनुवाद मे चाहे तो कृपया सम्पर्क करे।

如果您想得到该资料所含信息的译文，请联系：

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਲੀਫਲੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਦਿਤੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਇਥੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ اس لیفٹ میں درج معلومات کا ترجمہ اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو ہم سے رابطہ کریں