

# Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Help us to better understand what we are doing well and where we can improve.



We welcome and encourage your feedback

## Why is your feedback important?

It is important for us to understand your experience of dealing with Dumfries and Galloway Council. If we are doing something well, we want to build on that. If there is an area where we could do better, we want to learn from your experience and improve how we deliver our services. Your feedback helps us to understand what you think about the service you have received.

## Comments

A comment might be some brief feedback about how we have handled a situation or delivered a service. It is often best to pass a comment straight to the service it relates to so that they can take any necessary action. You may be suggesting an improvement to what they do or a change to how they operate. If you don't want to tell the service directly, you can complete the form attached to this leaflet.

## Compliments

It is important for us to know when we are getting it right. If you have positive feedback about a service or staff member, it is useful for us to know. To give us positive feedback, you can tell the service directly or complete the form attached to this leaflet.

When we receive a compliment, it is passed on to the relevant manager and fed back to the staff involved in delivering that service.

## Dumfries and Galloway Council's Complaints Handling Procedure

Dumfries and Galloway 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 handling 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 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:

- delays or failures in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- our failure to follow council policy. Complaints about the policies themselves should be directed to your local Councillor rather than the complaints handling procedure as these are committee decisions.

- 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 road repair, request for gritting or action on antisocial behaviour. These requests should be directed to the relevant service.
- requests for compensation from the Council as these are dealt with as claims via our insurers.
- matters that are covered by a right of appeal. Here are some examples:
  - If your planning application is refused, you have the right to request either an appeal to Scottish Ministers or a review by the planning authority's Local Review Body. Which one depends on the circumstances of the application and the timescale for appeal or review will normally be explained in correspondence and the decision notice from the planning authority.

- 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. For further guidance, you can contact the relevant service direct via the main Council telephone number 030 33 33 3000.

## 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 on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

## How do I complain?

You can complain in person at any of our offices, by phone, in writing, by email or via our complaints form. Full contact details are available at the end of this leaflet.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. 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 would you like us to resolve the matter.

## How long do I have to make my 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 the time limit should not apply to you please tell us why when you submit your complaint.

## What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint and within what timescale you can expect a response.

## 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 for this to be extended to 10 working days.

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
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied with your Stage One response 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.

## Social Work Complaints

If your complaint is about Social Work Services and the service you receive from them, there is an additional stage in the complaints handling procedure which you are legally entitled to. This third stage, for Social Work service users, involves an independent 'Complaints Review Panel' reviewing the points of complaint that have not been fully upheld.

You will be provided with further details of this stage of the complaints handling procedure, including what it involves, in your Stage Two response letter.

### 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 handling 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

**Freephone:** 0800 377 7330

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

**Mobile site:** <http://m.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/>

**Telephone:** 0845 600 9527

**Fax:** 01382 207 289

**Online:** complaints form

**Email:** [enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto: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 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.

Before we discuss your complaint with them we may ask that you complete a 'mandate' which is a form giving written permission for us to discuss your personal information with another person.

You may also be able to get free, confidential advice and support from:

- Citizens Advice Direct - 0844 848 9600
- The Dumfries and Galloway Advocacy Service - 01387 247 237
- Who Cares? Scotland (for Young People) - 0141 226 4441

Your local Councillor, MSP or MP can also make enquiries on your behalf.

You can find out about more information 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. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing contact us on 030 33 33 3000.

Your complaint will be kept confidential. Details will only be given to and accessed by those people who need to know in order to investigate your complaint.

## Our contact details

FREEPOST - RTHK-RAGT-KTHT

Information Management and Complaints Unit, Dumfries and Galloway Council, 118 English Street, Dumfries, DG1 2DE

**Telephone** 030 33 33 3000

**Email** [commentsandcomplaints@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:commentsandcomplaints@dumgal.gov.uk)

**Web** [www.dumgal.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/complaints)

**We can also give you this information in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille). Please telephone 030 33 33 3000**

# Comments, Compliments and Complaints

This is a

Comment

Compliment

Complaint

Name

Address

Postcode

Date

Telephone No

Email

Preferred method of contact: Email

Letter

Phone

If you have already spoken to someone about this matter, please tell us who and when.

Did you find this leaflet easy to read?

Yes

No

Did you find this leaflet easy to understand?

Yes

No

**Please turn over**



Please tell us about your comment, compliment or complaint (you can continue on a separate sheet if needed). Please include any relevant reference numbers.



If you are making a complaint, please tell us what you would like us to do to put things right for you?



Please put this form in an envelope and send to:

Information Management and Complaints Unit,  
Dumfries and Galloway Council, FREEPOST - RTHK-RAGT-KTHT, DG1 2DE

**This is a freepost address, so you do not need a stamp**