



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Complaints Policy and Procedures for Staff

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1. Why do we need a Complaints Procedure?

As a Council we try to provide a good service at all times but occasionally things do go wrong. When they do, we need to know so we can put things right and learn from them for the future. The main aim of the Complaints Procedure that we have put in place at Ashford Borough Council is to make it simpler and easier for customers to complain.

We want to:

- Make it easier for customers to complain by phone, fax, e-mail, letter, web or in person.
- Handle all complaints fairly and consistently.
- Try and resolve complaints on the spot.
- Improve our services by listening and acting on customer feedback.

Complaints are a useful source of information about how others view our services. Dealing with complaints effectively, efficiently and courteously forms a person's view of the Council and its likely future performance.

This guide is designed to provide all staff with a clear framework for handling complaints and aims to:

- Provide a definition of a complaint in broad terms.
- Set out minimum service standards for complaints handling.
- Set out the three stages of the Complaints Procedure and recommended timescales.
- Provide staff with the knowledge to deal with complaints effectively.

2. What is a complaint?

A complaint can be defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

(Local Government Ombudsman)

It is important to note that this definition is designed not to be too rigid so it doesn't exclude or prevent customers from making a complaint.

It is also important to distinguish between a complaint and a comment. Sometimes customers give feedback, but don't require an outcome, e.g. response or remedy, they simply want to make us aware of something.

A customer may be dissatisfied and wish to complain because:

- **we failed to provide a service**
- **we delayed in providing a service**
- **we made a mistake in providing a service**
- **we failed to act in a proper way**
- **we provided an unfair service**

If a customer tells you they want to make a complaint, the issue should be dealt with as such, even though you may not regard it as a complaint. If the customer feels strongly enough about an issue to make a complaint, we should view the matter as such whether the complaint is justified or not. However, an enquiry or a request for a service should not be viewed as a complaint. (For example, reporting a faulty street light or a request for refuse collection). Requests for information or an explanation of Council policy or practice should also not be viewed as a complaint.

3. Complaints excluded from the Complaints Procedure

- Complaints from members of staff about personnel issues (for example, appointments, disciplinary matters, grievances, pay and pensions). These types of complaints should be addressed to the Head of Personnel and Development.
- Issues which are considered under an existing right of appeal (for example, planning appeals and housing benefit appeals) unless the complaint refers to the way the matter has been administered.
- Complaints regarding the merits of a decision taken properly and with all the necessary information (for example, Planning applications).
- Complaints about Councillors (See section 6 for further information on how to complain about a Councillor).

4. Complaint Service Standards

It is important that we have basic service standards in place for complaints handling. This is to ensure that each department is delivering the same standard of service consistently across the Council. All departments will be required to adhere to the procedures laid down in this document, although it is recognised that departmental procedures may need to be tailored to particular service requirements.

- All complaints to be recorded to assist in tracking and monitoring complaints and identifying trends.
- All complaints to be acknowledged within the timescales laid down in the Complaints Procedure. Customers must be provided with details of the person

handling the complaint, contact details and a response date if complaint cannot be resolved on the spot.

- Target response dates for each stage of the procedure must be adhered to, unless there are compelling reasons why they can't be met. In such cases the complainant must be kept fully informed.

Customers must be informed at each stage of their right to escalate to the next stage of the procedure if they are not satisfied with the response.

5. Complaints about Council Policy

Complaints about Council policy should be investigated using the Complaints Procedure to ensure the policy has been properly and fairly applied. The complainant should also receive a clear explanation of the policy to ensure they fully understand it. If the Council policy has been properly and fairly applied, no maladministration has occurred, but if the complainant still disagrees with the policy then in some instances it may be appropriate for the handling officer to recommend changes to Councillors. It is beyond the remit of Officers to change policy without the consent of Councillors, therefore if the Officer handling the complaint or the complainant considers that the policy should be reviewed, a report should be prepared for consideration by the Executive Committee who may wish to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake the review. The complainant should be kept informed of the review process and the outcome of the review. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at this stage they should contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

Complaints relating to Council policy are included within the Complaints Procedure and should be logged and recorded on the Complaints Tracker, to analyse trends in particular areas or services and to recommend policy changes.

6 Complaints about Ashford Borough Councillors, Parish or Town Councillors

Complaints about Ashford Borough Councillors, Parish or Town Councillors are excluded from the Complaints Procedure and should be made to the Council's Monitoring Officer in writing by downloading, completing and signing the [Local Councillor Conduct Complaint Form](#) or by requesting a form from Ashford Borough Council on 01233 33111 and posting it to: -

The Monitoring Officer
Legal and Democratic Services
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1PL

Complaints can be made by members of the public, officers and fellow Councillors and must relate to conduct which is or may be a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct and not the Council as whole.

From 8 May 2008 the responsibility for considering complaints that local councillors may have breached the Code of Conduct moved from the Standards Board for England to the Standards Committee of local authorities. Parish Council Codes of Conduct are in very similar terms.

Complaints will normally be considered by an Assessment Panel which is a sub-committee of the Borough Council's Standards Committee. If the Panel decides to take no action on a complaint, this can be reviewed at the request of the complainant by a Review Panel. Where matters are referred for investigation they may end up being heard before a Hearings Panel to decide upon further action. The Panels can only deal with complaints about the conduct of a councillor. The Terms of Reference of the Assessment Panel, the Review Panel and the Hearings Panel outline what each of the Panels can do.

The Panels cannot deal with complaints about things that are not covered by the Code of Conduct. In deciding how to deal with complaints, the Assessment Panel or Review Panel will have regard to the Assessment Criteria adopted by the Standards Committee.

Further guidance may be obtained from the Standards Board's website. The Standards Board has provided a guide to Making a Complaint which can be downloaded from the website and it also contains much other useful and relevant information.

The Borough Council's Monitoring Officer can be contacted by email terry.mortimer@ashford.gov.uk or by telephone on 01233 330210.

7. Who can complain?

- Anyone who lives, works or visits the borough and receives our services is entitled to complain.
- Any corporate body acting on behalf of itself, its employees or its customers.
- Members, MPs and Advice Agencies acting on behalf of an individual or group of individuals.
- A councillor may complain in his/her own right or on behalf of a resident or service user.

8. How can someone make a complaint?

We want to make sure the Complaints Procedure is open and accessible to everyone.

A customer can complain in the following ways:

- in person
- in writing
- by phone
- using the on-line [complaint form](#)
- e-Mail: customer.service@ashford.gov.uk

Information on the Complaints Procedure can be provided in large print, Braille or audiotape for disabled residents. Anyone requiring this information should contact the Customer Service Supervisors for further details.

Complaint forms are available directly from the Council Offices, Ashford Gateway, Tenterden Gateway and can also be sent to a customer on request.

9. On-line Feedback Facility

Customers can make a complaint on-line via the complaint form on the [Ashford Borough Council website](#)

These forms will be received by the Customer Service Manager and forwarded to the relevant Service for handling through the standards Complaints Procedure. The Customer Service Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant of contact details for the person handling the complaint and timescales for a response, an automatic record will appear in the Complaints Tracker for monitoring purposes.

10. How to deal with a complaint

If we make a mistake or fail to provide a service, we should take quick and effective action to resolve the problem. The person handling the complaint should try and resolve any complaint on the spot if possible, although there may be some more complex complaints you may not be able to deal with and resolve immediately. The customer may then have to go through the stages of the Complaints Procedure. (See section 14 for details of the Complaints Procedure).

When trying to resolve the complaint you should:

- Be open.
- Be polite.
- Look at the problem from the customer's point of view.

- Be sensitive to the issue.
- Ask the customer what it is they wish the council to do, if it isn't already obvious.
- Let the customer know what you can or cannot reasonably do and the time limits.
- Let the customer know the contact name and phone number of the person dealing with the complaint.
- Keep the customer informed about the progress of their complaint if you are unable to, for exceptional reasons, respond to the complainant within the recommended timescales.
- Make sure any actions or promises you have made are carried out.
- If you are unable to deal with the complaint, tell the customer as soon as possible and let them know what they need to do and who they need to contact.

We cannot assume that the customer understands Council procedures. It is always a good idea to find out how much they know and explain the procedures if necessary. Once they understand how the Council and its services work then this may resolve the issue. For example, a customer new to Housing Benefit or a new Planning applicant may not understand the systems. If the customer still wishes to proceed with their complaint, they have the mechanism to do so through the Complaints Procedure. Some customers assume that the Council is responsible for everything. There will be times when the complaint is outside the remit of the Council. It is important though that the complaint is acknowledged and an explanation given to the customer as to who is responsible for the service which is being complained about.

Acknowledgement

It is important that the complainant knows:

- That the complaint has been received.
- The timescale for receiving a response.
- The person who will be responding and dealing with the complaint (i.e. contact name, telephone number and e-mail address).

Replying to the complainant

Ensure that all the issues raised are answered.

- Avoid jargon.
- Let the complainant know the next stage of the procedure if they are not satisfied with the response.
- Remember that you can apologise and express regret at what has happened without admitting liability:

For example:

- you can say 'I am sorry to hear you are upset' or 'I am concerned to hear'
- you can apologise for the additional time taken to respond to the complaint
- you can apologise for the failure to inform about a planning decision (but that does not mean that the decision itself was wrong)
- you can say 'I am sorry that you are unhappy with the way we have provided this service'

These are very different from admitting liability. If you think, however, that an apology might result in legal liability to the Council please check the reply with the Legal Services Team before sending the response.

11. Remedies and Compensation

In most cases complainants simply seek recognition that something has gone wrong, an apology and an outline of the resolution. However, when a complainant has requested compensation it is important that you refer to the Council's Remedies Guidelines to ensure adherence.

12. Difficult Customers

There are occasions when complainants become very angry. As Council staff, we have a responsibility to listen to our complainants and be courteous. However, you do not have to be subjected to abuse from complainants. If a complainant is verbally/physically abusive or has threatened physical violence you can explain to the complainant that you do not have to be subjected to any swearing, shouting or physical violence. You have the right to end the telephone call or interview provided you have notified the complainant of this. If you have to end the telephone call or interview you must produce a record of this through the Incident Reporting System.

13. Guidelines for dealing with Persistent Complainants

Some complainants may become unreasonable in their approach when making a complaint and can cause additional strain on time and resources.

13.1 What determines a persistent complainant?

- Complainant who makes an unreasonable number of complaints relating to the same issue. (It is advisable to use discretion when determining an 'unreasonable number' and this should be based on the circumstances of each individual case).
- Complainant who is determined to make a complaint which is outside the Council's remit.
- Complainant who persists in making a complaint and is not willing to follow the Complaints Procedure.
- Complainant who is demanding investigation/resolution but who will not specify the precise nature of the complaint.

- Complainant who is placing unreasonable demands on staff (for example, not allowing a staff member the opportunity to investigate the issue, or repeatedly contacting different members of staff about the same issue).
- Complainants who continuously send, extremely long emails or high volumes of written material, irrelevant to their complaint, creating high volumes of work.

If you are dealing with a complainant and feel that they are unreasonably persistent or vexatious, you should inform your manager immediately. The Head of Service should at this stage decide on the most appropriate course of action to take.

Examples of actions which could be considered:

- Head of Service to write to the complainant outlining a code of behaviour to adhere to when processing the complaint.
- Inform the complainant in writing of a single point of contact – (for example, Head of Service) when contacting the Council in relation to the complaint.
- Inform the complainant in writing that the Council will only maintain one method of contact with the complainant (for example, by letter or in person).
- Inform the complainant in writing that the Council has tried to resolve the complaint but the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and there is nothing further to add.
- In extreme circumstances, we can inform the complainant that we reserve the right to pass persistent or vexatious complainants to our Legal department.

14. Complaints Procedure

14.1 Does the complaint have to be in writing?

Complaints can be received in different ways outlined previously in the document. If you receive a complaint verbally, however, and it is of a serious or complex nature you can ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing. This will ensure that we have all the correct details and that we are clear about which parts of the service the complainant is unhappy with.

14.2 Who deals with the complaint?

Complaints will be received initially by the Service concerned. Each Service will have nominated or key people to respond to complaints. This will vary according to each Service and it is the responsibility of each Head of Service to nominate these people. Once the designated officer in the Service has received a complaint, it should be dealt with through the stages of the Complaints Procedure.

14.3 What happens if I receive a complaint about another Service?

If you receive a complaint relating to another Service you should let the complainant know the contact details of the person handling the complaint. The complaint should

be passed to that Service and dealt with within the normal timescales. This should also be logged using the Complaint Tracker.

Acknowledging the Complaint

An acknowledgement should be made to the complainant within **3 working days** of receiving the complaint at all stages. If the complaint is of a general nature and may be resolved by a telephone call, you can acknowledge receipt of the complaint and also try to resolve the complaint on the spot.

Using the phone can be a quicker, cheaper and more effective way of dealing with a complaint. A note should be recorded to say that an acknowledgement has been made and any relevant details from the call. You may wish to follow up with a letter to make sure there is no misunderstanding.

If you are unable to contact the complainant by telephone, or the complaint is of a more complex nature, you should acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing.

When acknowledging receipt of the complaint the following details should be provided: name, telephone number and e-mail address (if appropriate) of the person handling the complaint and the response date for the reply.

15. Complaints Procedure: Response Timescale Summary

	Acknowledgement (Working Days)	Reply (Working Days)	Total
Stage 1	3 days	15 days	15 days
Stage 2	3 days	20 days	20 days

The Local Government Ombudsman requires all local authorities to deal with a complaint at all stages within 12 weeks (60 working days). The timescale set out in this procedure exceeds these requirements.

Stage 1 'Informal Stage' – Service Level

The complaint is dealt with by the person or service concerned. The aim is to resolve the issue on the spot as quickly and effectively as possible. We should have investigated the complaint and sent out a written response within **15 working days**. If more time is required we must let the complainant know and update them on progress so far.

Stage 2 Head of Department

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after receiving the response they could make their complaint to the relevant Head of Service who will investigate and respond to

them. Complainants can find a list of Heads of Service or by calling Customer Services on 01233 331111.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at the final stage of the complaints Procedure they have the right to complain to the **Local Government Ombudsman**.

Local Government Ombudsman

If after following our complaints procedure the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's handling of the matter they may wish to contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

16. Complaints about Services provided by Contractors

Complaints about services provided by contractors, on behalf of the Council, should follow the same two stage process as outlined above.

All Ashford Borough Council contracts with Service Providers should outline adherence and co-operation to our Complaints Policy and Procedures.

17. Customer Complaints Tracker

The Council's in-house Customer Complaints Tracker is used to log, monitor progress and report on corporate complaints.

The system has been built to provide prompts/reminders and automated responses to customers at appropriate times.

The Tracker can be accessed by officers via the intranet. If a customer opts to report a complaint via the web, this will automatically be added to the tracker and the Customer Service Team will allocate the complaint to the appropriate service.

18. Tracking Customer Satisfaction

The Council's Complaints Tracking System will send prompts/reminders to assist with timescale adherence when handling complaints.

When a response has been sent to the complainant, it is imperative that the Tracker is updated. It is also important that any further response from the complainant is also added to the Tracker, some of this will be provided through automation.

The Tracker sends an automated letter to the complainant one month after the complaint response was sent, to ensure the complaint was successfully resolved and to gain feedback from the Customer regarding their satisfaction of our complaint handling/resolution. See Appendix 3

19. Tracking Equality and Accessibility

Where equal opportunities data is provided by the customer, this should be added to the Tracker in order to monitor whether any customer profile is or could be being discriminated against.

20. Two Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: 'Informal Stage'

Acknowledgement Timescale: 3 working Days
Reply Timescale: 15 working Days

The designated officer handling the complaint at Stage 1 should wherever possible, contact the customer by telephone. On many occasions it is helpful to discuss the complaint, clarify the customer's expected outcome and identify any opportunity to speedily resolve the complaint. Notes need to be kept of any conversations with the customer and all actions taken in dealing with the complaint.

If the complaint is complex, the designated officer may need to discuss the complaint with their manager for assistance and guidance.

Acknowledgement

The complaint must be acknowledged within **3 working days** of the Service receiving the complaint, this will automatically be produced by the Tracker, once the Service Representative/Customer Service Advisor has entered the information onto the Tracker System.

Reply

If the complaint cannot be resolved on the spot at this stage it may require further investigation or a more detailed response. The designated officer should then carry out an investigation and send a reply to the customer within **15 working days** from acknowledgement of the complaint.

We should aim to provide a response within the 15 working days at all times. If we cannot provide a response within the timescale, the complainant must be contacted and informed of the new date for the response and the reasons for the delay.

Reply Letter

The reply letter should outline the next stage of the Complaints Procedure if the customer is not satisfied with the response. The paragraph below should be included at the end of each letter:

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint please write to (Head of Service) for a review of your complaint to be carried out at Stage 2 of the Council's

Complaints Procedure. Your letter will be acknowledged within 3 working days and a response provided within 15 working.

Input information onto the Complaints Tracker

Stage 2: Head of Service

Acknowledgement Timescale: 3 working Days

Reply Timescale: 20 working Days

The Head of Service will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is complex, or is a complaint about the Head of Service, they should ask either an alternative Head of Service, or the Chief Executive, to carry out the investigation at this stage.

Acknowledgement

The Head of Service or Chief Executive will send a written acknowledgement to the complainant within **3 working days** of receipt and will at this stage undertake a full independent investigation of the complaint.

Reply

A full written response should be made to the complainant within **20 working days**.

If after the Stage 2 investigation the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. Complaints should be referred to the Ombudsman only after both stages of the Complaints Procedure have been exhausted.

Input information onto the Complaints Tracker

Stage 2 Head of Service Investigation Aim

The aim of the Stage 2 investigation is to provide and demonstrate a degree of independence in terms of reviewing complaints previously investigated by other Council Services. The purpose of the independent and impartial investigation is to determine that all procedures have been followed, as opposed to judging the merits of a decision taken.

21. Ashford Borough Council Complaints Handling Procedure Summary

Stage	Working Days	Procedure (Maximum Timescale)
Stage 1	(a) 3 Days	Complaint received at Service level. Designated officer within Service acknowledges complaint within three working days.
	(b) 15 Days	Officer to reply to complainant in writing within 15 working days if complaint cannot be resolved on the spot. Complainant must be informed about the next stage of the Complaints Procedure if they are not satisfied with the response.
Stage 2	(a) 3 Days	Complaint received at Head of Service level or where appropriate the Chief Executive. Complaint at Stage 2 to be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days.
	(b) 20 Days	Head of Service/Chief Executive will arrange an investigation to the complaint and reply in writing to the complainant within 20 working days. Complainant must be informed that they have the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if they are not satisfied with the outcome at this stage.

22. How can we put things right?

It is important to ask the customer to suggest what they would like us to do to put things right. This question is included on the Complaint form. We should aim to take practical action to put things right when it is required.

Here are some examples:

- Apologise to the customer.
- Provide information to the customer.
- Provide the service that we failed to deliver initially.
- Review customer leaflets/posters (information may be misleading/unclear).
- Review working practices and procedures.
- Employee training.

- Request Councillors/Committees to review a Council policy.
- Pay compensation or a refund – for example, a time and trouble payment.

23. Complaints received by Councillors

When a complaint is received by a Councillor, the complaint should be referred to the Service Complaints Representative and any investigations should be followed through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

The Councillor will need to be kept informed of the investigations and should be supplied with copies of any replies sent to the complainant on behalf of the Council.

The Councillor, by law, cannot act individually on behalf of the Council, but is able to clarify all the issues with the complainant and make further enquiries. The complainant and Councillor should be made aware that the official response will come from the Council Service concerned.

24. Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman service is an independent body that investigates allegations of maladministration causing injustice to the person who has complained.

A customer has the right at any time to submit a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman, however, will normally only consider the complaint once the Council has had an opportunity to answer the complaint and it has gone through the Complaints Procedure. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Council's response or if the Council does not give a reply within a reasonable time they can complain to the Ombudsman.

The Local Government Ombudsman has a leaflet called "Complained to the Council? – Still not satisfied?" and this is available from the Council Offices, Ashford and Tenterden Gateways.

The Local Government Ombudsman requires local authorities to deal with a complaint at all stages within 12 weeks.

All new complaints now go to the LGO Advice Team in Coventry and not to the offices in London. The Advice Team can be contacted on 0845 602 1983 or on 0300 061 0614 or in writing to:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH
www.lgo.org.uk

25. Role of the Customer Service Manager

The role of the Customer Service Manager is to devise, implement and monitor customer feedback systems throughout the Council, and to provide support to staff and senior managers to deliver remedies and improvements to services through dealing effectively with complaints.

Responsibilities

- To ensure that all staff and Councillors are aware of the existence of such policies and procedures and their responsibilities in implementing them.
- To provide guidance to all staff and Councillors to assist them in providing an improved level of service to customers.
- To set and monitor standard service level performance targets in line with the Complaints Procedure.
- To develop, maintain and respond to online customer feedback facilities to improve levels of access for customers to comment on Council services.
- To provide a means of contact for customers seeking advice on the Complaints Procedure via the freephone number and e-mail address.
- To distribute customer feedback information to all staff.
- To assume responsibility for the implementation and management of the complaints feedback system.

26. Role of Senior Scrutiny Officer (Member and Scrutiny Services)

- To provide a point of contact between the Council and the Local Government Ombudsman.
- To ensure that LGO complaints are dealt with within given timescales.
- To provide information on LGO complaints to the Monitoring Officer for his annual report to the Standards Committee.

Complaints Checklist for Staff

- Give your name.
- Listen to what the customer is saying.
- Be polite.
- Be open.
- Be clear.
- Try to stay calm even if the person gets angry.
- If you feel threatened you have the right to end the telephone call or interview (but you need to let the complainant know you are about to do this).
- Give the customer a copy of the Complaints Leaflet (it contains the complaints form) or refer them to the [online complaints](#) pages
- Tell the customer what happens next and the stages of the Complaints Procedure.
- If you need to refer a complaint to someone else, make sure you give the customer full details.
- Act quickly once the complainant has left.
- Don't consider the complaint as a personal criticism.

Tips for Dealing with Complaints

Do

- Give your name.
- Listen.
- Get all the details.
- Let the person decide if they wish to pursue their "complaint" as a complaint.
- Ask the complainant what resolution they are seeking to their complaint.
- Explain what will happen next and the stages of the procedure.

Don't

- Accept abuse from a complainant (for example swearing) – you have a right to be spoken to courteously.
- Argue with the complainant.
- Deter people from making a complaint.

Useful Contacts

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
Tel: 0300 0610614 or 0845 6021983
Fax: 02476 8820001
Email: advice@lgo.org.uk
www.lgo.gov.uk

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 SAF
Tel: 01625 545 745
www.ico.gov.uk

The Monitoring Officer
Legal and Democratic Services
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1PL

Email: terry.mortimer@ashford.gov.uk
Tel: 01233 330210

[Service Field Name]

Ask For: [Field Name]
Email: [Field Name]
Direct Line: [Field Name]
Fax No: [Field Name]

[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent TN23 1PL
(01233) 331111
Typetalk (01233) 330744
www.ashford.gov.uk
DX 151140 Ashford (Kent) 7

Our Ref: [Field Name]
Your Ref: [Field Name]
Date: [Field Name]

Dear [Field Name]

Further to your complaint received on [Field Date] and our response. [Service Field Name] are committed to dealing with complaints quickly, fairly and effectively to the satisfaction of the complainant. We are also keen to improve our service and would be pleased if you would complete the survey form attached and return in the prepaid envelope provided.

Yours sincerely

[Field Name]
[Field Title]

Survey letter

[Service Field Name]

Ask For: [Field Name]
Email: [Field Name]
Direct Line: [Field Name]
Fax No: [Field Name]

[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]

Our Ref: [Field Name]
Your Ref: [Field Name]
Date: [Field Name]

Dear [Field Name]

Further to your complaint received on [Field Date] and our response. [Service Field Name] are committed to dealing with complaints quickly, fairly and effectively to the satisfaction of the complainant. We are also keen to improve our service and would be pleased if you would complete the survey form attached and return in the prepaid envelope provided.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you may contact the Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH - Telephone: 0845 602 1983 or 0300 061 0614 advice line or visit their internet site at www.lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

[Field Name]
[Field Title]

Survey letter Ombudsman



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Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent TN23 1PL
(01233) 331111
Typetalk (01233) 330744
www.ashford.gov.uk
DX 151140 Ashford (Kent) 7

[Service Field Name]

Ask For: [Field Name]
Email: [Field Name]
Direct Line: [Field Name]
Our Ref: [Field Name]
Date: [Field Name]



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Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent TN23 1PL
(01233) 331111
Typetalk (01233) 330744
www.ashford.gov.uk
DX 151140 Ashford (Kent) 7

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Complaints Procedure

1. How did you report your complaint?

Telephone Complaint form Email
Letter In person

2. Did you understand the complaints procedure?

Yes No

3. Did you receive an acknowledgement?

Within 3 working days After 3 working days
None received

4. Did you receive a full response in 15 working days?

Yes No

5. Were you kept informed of the progress of your complaint?

Yes No

6. Were staff helpful that you had contact with?

Yes No

7. Were you satisfied with the way we handled your complaint?

Very satisfied Fairly satisfied Satisfied
Dissatisfied Fairly dissatisfied Very dissatisfied

8. How satisfied were you with the outcome/response from your complaint?

Very satisfied Fairly satisfied Satisfied
Dissatisfied Fairly dissatisfied Very dissatisfied

Any general comments?

.....
.....
.....

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (please tick the box that applies to you)

It is against the law and our equal opportunities policy to discriminate against anyone because of their sex, colour, race, religion, disability or sexual preference. In order to ensure that we do not discriminate, we need to keep records. You do not have to complete these questions if you do not wish to do so.

If you would prefer, you can complete this form online at www.ashford.gov.uk/_____

I am: Female Male

My age is: 16-24 25-44 45-59 60-74 75+

Household Single Single with child/ren Couple

Composition: Couple with child/ren Other

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Yes No

My sexuality is: Heterosexual Gay Lesbian Other

White: British ^(WB) Irish ^(WI) Any other White background ^(WO)

Mixed White and Black Caribbean ^(MWBC)
White and Black African ^(MWBA)
White and Asian ^(MWA)
Any other mixed background ^(MO)

Asian or Asian Indian ^(AI) Pakistani ^(AP)
Bangladeshi ^(AB) Any other Asian background ^(AO)

Black or Black Caribbean ^(BC) African ^(BA)
Any other Black background ^(BO)

Chinese or Other Ethnic Group Chinese ^(CC) Any other ethnic background ^(CO)

Do not wish to answer? Decline to Answer ^(DTA)

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire, it will help us to improve the service we offer to you.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the Postage paid envelope enclosed

Complaints Checklist for Staff

- Give your name.
- Listen to what the customer is saying.
- Be polite.
- Be open.
- Be clear.
- Try to stay calm even if the person gets angry.
- If you feel threatened you have the right to end the telephone call or interview (but you need to let the complainant know you are about to do this).
- Give the customer a copy of the Complaints Leaflet (it contains the complaints form) or refer them to the [online complaints](#) pages
- Tell the customer what happens next and the stages of the Complaints Procedure.
- If you need to refer a complaint to someone else, make sure you give the customer full details.
- Act quickly once the complainant has left.
- Don't consider the complaint as a personal criticism.

Tips for Dealing with Complaints

Do

- Give your name.
- Listen.
- Get all the details.
- Let the person decide if they wish to pursue their "complaint" as a complaint.
- Ask the complainant what resolution they are seeking to their complaint.
- Explain what will happen next and the stages of the procedure.

Don't

- Accept abuse from a complainant (for example swearing) – you have a right to be spoken to courteously.
- Argue with the complainant.
- Deter people from making a complaint.

Useful Contacts

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
Tel: 0300 0610614 or 0845 6021983
Fax: 02476 8820001
Email: advice@lgo.org.uk
www.lgo.gov.uk

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 SAF
Tel: 01625 545 745
www.ico.gov.uk

The Monitoring Officer
Legal and Democratic Services
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1PL

Email: terry.mortimer@ashford.gov.uk
Tel: 01233 330210

[Service Field Name]

Ask For: [Field Name]
Email: [Field Name]
Direct Line: [Field Name]
Fax No: [Field Name]

[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent TN23 1PL
(01233) 331111
Typetalk (01233) 330744
www.ashford.gov.uk
DX 151140 Ashford (Kent) 7

Our Ref: [Field Name]
Your Ref: [Field Name]
Date: [Field Name]

Dear [Field Name]

Further to your complaint received on [Field Date] and our response. [Service Field Name] are committed to dealing with complaints quickly, fairly and effectively to the satisfaction of the complainant. We are also keen to improve our service and would be pleased if you would complete the survey form attached and return in the prepaid envelope provided.

Yours sincerely

[Field Name]
[Field Title]

Survey letter

[Service Field Name]

Ask For: [Field Name]
Email: [Field Name]
Direct Line: [Field Name]
Fax No: [Field Name]

[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]
[Field Name]

Our Ref: [Field Name]
Your Ref: [Field Name]
Date: [Field Name]

Dear [Field Name]

Further to your complaint received on [Field Date] and our response. [Service Field Name] are committed to dealing with complaints quickly, fairly and effectively to the satisfaction of the complainant. We are also keen to improve our service and would be pleased if you would complete the survey form attached and return in the prepaid envelope provided.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you may contact the Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH - Telephone: 0845 602 1983 or 0300 061 0614 advice line or visit their internet site at www.lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

[Field Name]
[Field Title]

Survey letter Ombudsman



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[Service Field Name]

Ask For: [Field Name]
Email: [Field Name]
Direct Line: [Field Name]
Our Ref: [Field Name]
Date: [Field Name]



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Customer Satisfaction Survey

Complaints Procedure

1. **How did you report your complaint?**

Telephone Complaint form Email
Letter In person

2. **Did you understand the complaints procedure?**

Yes No

3. **Did you receive an acknowledgement?**

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None received

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